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TikTok-Fueled Matcha Craze Sparks Global Shortage

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The vibrant green matcha powder, beloved for its health benefits and aesthetic appeal, faces a global shortage driven by a TikTok-fueled frenzy. Viral social media trends and booming tourism in Japan have strained traditional production, pushing prices to record highs and leaving suppliers scrambling. This article explores the causes of the

shortage and its economic ripple effects, questioning the sustainability of social media-driven consumerism.

Matcha, derived from shade-grown tencha leaves of the *Camellia sinensis* plant, has surged in popularity, particularly among Millennials and Gen Z, thanks to TikTok's viral recipes and "matcha haul" videos. The Global Japanese Tea Association (GJTA) reports an "unprecedented" demand spike since autumn 2024, with co-founder Anna Poian noting to ABC News, "Tea farmers are happy about the interest, but many cannot cope." Japan's 2024 tourism boom, with 36 million visitors including 920,000 Australians, exacerbated the shortage, as tourists bulk-buy matcha as souvenirs, often for resale. Kyoto's Ippodo Tea told *The Business*, "Demand has surged beyond all expectations," with purchase limits now common.

Production constraints worsen the crisis. Matcha's labor-intensive process—shading plants for three weeks, hand-picking leaves, and stone-grinding—yields just 40 grams per hour, as Professor Daniel Tan from the University of Sydney explained to *YourLifeChoices*. Japan's 2023 matcha output reached 4,176 tonnes, triple that of 2010, yet demand outpaces supply. At Kyoto's first 2025 tea auction, tencha prices hit 8,000 yen (\$87) per kilogram, a record high. Marukyu Koyamaen announced 50-60% price hikes, impacting cafes like Sydney's Moon & Back, where owner Elvan Fan pre-orders to avoid stockouts, as she told ABC News.

The shortage raises concerns about quality and sustainability. Posts on X criticize TikTok-driven overconsumption, with users like @GugsM warning of environmental strain. Some fear inferior Chinese knockoffs may flood the market, diluting matcha's cultural value. Japan's government offers subsidies to boost tencha production, but scaling up risks compromising

quality. As prices rise and shelves empty, the matcha craze underscores the perils of social media amplifying demand beyond what traditional industries can sustain.